R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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AN IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE METHODS TO EMPLOY IN CONDUCTING AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM TO REACH AND TEACH LOW-INCOME YOUNG HOMEMAKERS IN RURAL AREAS. PAPER PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH (CHICAGO, 1968).

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FOURTEEN NONPROFESSIONAL PROGRAM ASSISTANTS WERE CHOSEN TO CONDUCT THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR LOW INCOME HOMEMAKERS IN FIVE ALABAMA COUNTIES, SUPERVISED BY THE COUNTY HOME ECONOMIST. THE STATE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF INCLUDED A SPECIALIST IN EDUCATIONAL METHODS, AN ASSISTANT SPECIALIST, AND AN ARTIST. DEPRIVED MOTHERS WERE REFERRED BY PUBLIC AGENCIES, SCHOOLS, AND CHURCHES. THE WORKING VISIT, A ONE-TO-ONE TEACHING METHOD IN THE HOMEMAKERS' HOME, TAUGHT BY TELLING, SHOWING, AND REPEATING A SKILL. EACH VISIT WAS DESIGNED TO MEET THE SPECIFIC INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF THE HOMEMAKER AT HER ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL, AND SKILL LEVEL. A SECOND METHOD UTILIZED SMALL INFORMAL GROUPS WHICH MET ACCORING TO INDIVIDUAL PLANS AND NEEDS. A LOW-READING-LEVEL NEWSLETTER WAS PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR USE IN BOTH METHODS. DAILY LOGS WERE KEPT OF EACH HOMEMAKER BY PROGRAM ASSISTANTS. IT WAS FOUND THAT PERSONALIZED INFORMAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES HELPED DEPRIVED YOUNG HOMEMAKERS RAISE THEIR LEVEL OF LIVING, ENCOURAGED MOTHERS AND FAMILIES TO GROW OUT OF THE RELIEF CYCLE, AND RAISED SELF ESTEEM, HOPES, AND ASPIRATIONS. IT WAS EVIDENT THAT IMPROVEMENT IN HOMEMAKER SKILLS RESULTED IN CLEANER HOMES, IMPROVED EATING HABITS, AND BETTER FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS. THE VALUE OF UTILIZING PROGRAM ASSISTANTS WAS ALSO SHOWN. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH, CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 11-13, 1968. (PT)

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BY Jeanne Priester

An Identification of Effective Methods to Employ in Conducting an Educational Program to Reach and Teach Low-Income Young Homemakers in Rural Areas.

SITUATION:

Practically all of the state of Alabama is classified as a rural area. The total population of the state is 3,266,740. Of this number, thirty per cent are non-white.[1] The per capita income for the state is $1910.[2] 39.1 per cent of the state's population has a family income of $3,000 or less. The median years of school completed by the male population, 25 years of age or older, is 8.9; for females, 25 years of age or older, is 9.3. Of the males, 25 years of age or older, 4.2% have completed no years of school; of the females, 25 years of age or older, 2.9% have completed no years of school.[3]

In families living in low-income rural areas of Alabama, there are many young mothers whose educational opportunities have been severly limited. These mothers are responsible for guiding young people in their formative years. They have to house, feed and clothe children on low budgets. Because these mothers are young enough to change attitudes and practices; because they are in a position to influence other family members; and because they are frequently the ones who are the most deprived and discouraged, this suggests that they should become involved in learning experiences which would aid them in improving their families' levels of living.

A study of the homemakers who are influenced by the traditional

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A preliminary report based on a paper presented by Jeanne Priester, Specialist, Educational Methods, Cooperative Extension Service, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, at National Seminar on Adult Education Research, Pick-Congress Hotel, Chicago, February 11-13, 1968.

programs of the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service revealed that approximately 50% are neither economically[4] nor educationally deprived.[5] Hence, because the Cooperative Extension Service in Alabama and the Federal Extension Service have a continuing interest in enlarging their programs to benefit all people in the fifty states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, this project was begun in July, 1964, to determine how to reach and teach low-income, young homemakers.

HYPOTHESES:

1. That it is possible for the Cooperative Extension Service to provide learning experiences for low-income, young homemakers which will:
   (a.) Raise the aspirations of family members.
   (b.) Help homemakers develop respect for themselves and their homemaking roles.
   (c.) Improve the health of family members.
   (d.) Help them to become prepared to accept improved economic opportunities as they develop.
   (e.) Help them become better parents and have a more satisfying family life.
   (f.) Increase their understanding of the community and help them to utilize its facilities and services.
2. That it is possible for the Cooperative Extension Service to develop publications and other teaching tools which can be understood and used by low, socio-economic families.
3. That it is possible for the Cooperative Extension Service to employ, train and supervise Program Assistants - non-professionals - who will conduct an educational program which will result in an increased level of living for low, socio-economic,

young families in rural areas.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Geographical Area: Five counties in the state were selected as the geographical area in which this study would be conducted. The total number of families in the five counties is 67,667. The total population is 281,732. The median family income varies from $1,334 to $3,927. The median years of school completed by males, 25 years of age or older, varies from 8.3 to 9.7 years. Of the females, 25 years of age or older, within the five counties, 2.35% have completed no years of school.[6] Three of these counties are in Appalachia.

Initiating the Study and Staffing: A Specialist in Educational Methods, an Assistant Specialist, and an artist are assigned full-time to the study. Other state administrative staff members and subject matter specialists also devote time to supervising and training the professional and the sub-professional staff members. In each county one home economist who was already on the County Extension Service staff supervises the project. Federal Extension Service staff members serve in an advisory capacity. Also an advisory committee composed of two Extension Service Administrators from other states, two Auburn University staff members and one Federal Extension Service staff member meet with us twice a year.

A total of fourteen non-professionals whom we call Program Assistants are employed to conduct the educational program in the five counties. In addition to the usual criteria, Alabama found the following criteria useful when selecting Program Assistants: they must be homemakers who have acceptable homemaking skills; they must be empathetic with low-income

young homemakers and capable of communicating with them; they must have an automobile to use on the job; they must be willing to establish an office area in their homes; they must have a telephone; they must be willing to accept supervision.

The average age of the Program Assistants is 47; the median age is 45.5. Their annual family incomes vary from $2500 to $15,000. Educational levels vary from seventh grade to college graduate. They majority of the Program Assistants remember the depression in the 1930's and recall ways to operate a home with a limited income from their personal experiences during those years. Only three of the fourteen Program Assistants live in towns with a population that exceeds 2,500.

Program Assistants are employed to do part-time work (not to exceed one thousand hours annually). Included in these hours are time spent in: receiving training in subject matter and methods, travel, preparing reports, teaching and evaluating publications.

Methods of Reaching and Teaching Homemakers: Agencies were informed of the project and as a result referrals were made by Welfare Departments, Public Health Nurses, school principals, teachers and school attendance officers, Extension Homemaker Club members, Directors of County Offices of Economic Opportunity, rural ministers and Directors of Donated Food and Food Stamp programs. After Program Assistants have established rapport with homemakers, the homemakers frequently give the Program Assistants names of relatives, friends, or acquaintances whom they think will be interested in the program.

The initial Home Visits are made by Program Assistants to determine whether or not homemakers will agree to let them come into her home to

teach or work with her. They're also made to determine the interest, the concerns and the "real" needs of homemakers and their families. Another purpose is to explain the Cooperative Extension Service's new homemaking program. Program Assistants report that a smile, frequent compliments, a kind word and a listening and understanding ear are some of their most effective tools. Other "interest" tools are the showing of the easy-to-read, illustrated recipes and publications and an "Idea Box" which contains handmade items that have appealed to homemakers. For example: "Idea Boxes" frequently contain pin cushions, hem markers, quilt squares, stuffed toys, easy-to-make blouses, recipe holders, etc. Sometimes Program Assistants are accepted during the initial visit and the date, time and purpose of a Working Visit are set. However, frequently, they must make several Home Visits before the hard-to-reach homemakers becomes a participant.

Working Visits: The Working Visit Method of teaching is on a one-to-one basis in the homemakers' homes. It includes teaching by telling, showing and having them do and then the homemakers repeat the skill until they master it. Each Working Visit is designed to meet the specific interests and concerns of each homemaker and is adapted so that teaching is within the economical, educational and skill's level of each homemaker. The time required to make a Working Visit varies from twenty minutes to three or four hours. Factors which influence the length of time required are: the activity, the homemakers' skills and interests, the homemakers' abilities and the family situations. There is no consistent pattern for scheduling Working Visits.

Sometimes the homemakers request that Program Assistants come back within the week and sometimes they say anytime is all right for you to come back. However, at least one Working Visit is scheduled monthly with each homemaker.

The Small, Informal Group Method of Teaching: The hard-to-reach homemakers are not the women who respond to newspaper or radio announcements of group meetings. They're not [illegible]men who are invited to join a group by friends and neighbors. Instead, a majority of the ones we've reached by the small Group Meeting Method of Teaching have become members only after they had been in the Working Visit program for quite some time.

We define a Group Meeting as a learning session which is attended by two or more Pilot Project homemakers. The time, date, place and purpose must be planned in advance. Generally, such groups have no roll check, no president, nor other characteristics of an organization. Again, the Program Assistants begin with the "expressed interests" of the group members when selecting the learning experiences for each group meeting. Some groups meet monthly, some bi-weekly and some weekly. There is no one schedule that will apply to all groups. In addition to the teaching of homemaking skills, tours to Vocational Trade Schools, County Health Departments, libraries, Extension Service offices, and to stores for consumer education purposes are included in the Group Method of Teaching. Tours are also conducted in an effort to increase each family's participation in the services of the community.

Mass Media: A low-reading level, "how-to-do-it" newsletter is published monthly by the state staff. "Katie Comes Calling" is its title and it's

written on the second to fourth grade reading level; has much white space; has many illustrations and usually contains a recipe for a low-cost dish. These newsletters are addressed and mailed to the homemakers.

EVALUATION:

Daily Logs are records kept by Program Assistants on each homemaker in the Individual Teaching program. What was taught and changes that families are making are recorded. Logs reveal some of the "real" and unrecognized problems of families; also revealed are the "interests" of homemakers which suggests subject matter to be included in publications. Logs also indicate the kind of subject matter that Program Assistants need.

Home Visit Schedules are kept on all families in the Individual Teaching program. They contain data on the family and its environment which is used in determining the characteristics of the hard-to-reach families and in evaluating the effectiveness of this educational program.

FINDINGS:

1. As Related to Hypothesis Number One

A. There is evidence that personalized informal learning experiences that are within the resources of the family are essential if geographically isolated and socially, economically and educationally deprived young homemakers are to raise the level of living of themselves and their families.

B. There is evidence that an educational program that focuses on the teaching of homemaking skills helps the mother develop a kind of home life that will encourage the children to go to school, learn to work and grow out of the relief cycle.

C. Results have shown that as a result of acquiring homemaking skills that young mothers and as well as their family members develop self-esteem;

that their hopes and aspirations are revieved and elevated and the families' internal and external relationships are improved. The program begins with the homemaker and expands to total family involvement.

D. Results have shown that many of the homemakers who are first involved in the Individual Working Method of Teaching will eventually become members of small informal groups. Some even graduate from this program and become active participants in traditional community clubs and groups.

E. Program Assistants have recorded significant changes made in 368 homes in which they have worked individually with young mothers. Improvement in homemaking skills have been evident. One hundred and fifty-six homemakers have cleaner homes, 188 have improved the eating habits of their families. They have served better balanced meals, are making better use of donated foods and of food stamps, and have increased the amount of whole or dry milk served to family members. One hundred and twelve have taken better care of their families, showing more interest in family members and evidence of better relationships between mothers and children; 150 of the young mothers have improved their personal appearance and 129 have improved the appearance of their children. Thirty-seven have been helped to increase their income with work done at home and 14 have been removed from welfare rolls. As a result of the encouragement of the program assistant, thirty-six children have been encouraged successfully to remain in school and thirty-two children's school work has been improved, six young mothers and four husbands have been enrolled in basic adult education classes, seventy-nine mothers have been influenced to receive assistance from public health nurses or public health programs.

During the three year period the program assistants have worked individually and in small groups with 686 young families in which there are 3,276 members.[6]

2. As Related to Hypothesis Number Two

Traditional Cooperative Extension Service publications are not appropriate for this audience group. Instead easy-to-read, one idea and well-illustrated publications are needed. Alabama has developed, field-tested, evaluated, revised and published 50 publications. Five thousand copies of most of the revised publications have been sent to the Federal Extension Service and they have sent them to the other forty-nine State Extension Offices, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and other agencies.*

3. As Related to Hypothesis Number Three

A. Results have shown that Program Assistants can conduct an educational program if they are continuously supervised and trained by an experienced Extension Home Economist who has access to the resources of the Land-Grant University; and if they have simplified, illustrated, easy-to-read publications and other simplified teaching tools to reinforce their teachings. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that both State and Federal Extension Service specialists can and will author such publications.

B. Individual teaching situations are necessary if most low-socio-economic families are going to raise the levels of living. These learning experiences must begin with the "interests" of the homemaker.

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* Alabama will send a file copy of each publication to anyone who requests them. Reprinting permission is granted to all who request it. The Division of Home Economics, Federal Extension Service, has developed many publications for low-income audiences which we also use. These are available from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

They include teaching by the Working Visit Method which is telling, showing and doing and then repeating the process until it is thoroughly understood. Program Assistants encourage application of the learned skill.

C. Even though learning experiences are based on the homemakers' interests and Working Visits and Group Meetings are planned accordingly, and even though the time and date are set by the homemaker, the sessions don't always materialize as planned. Frequently such crises as sickness in the immediate family or in the family of a close relative, an unexpected ride into town, visiting boy friends, and unexpected opportunity to work as a day-laborer on a farm, a feud with a neighbor, etc., cause cancellations or cause them to be away from home when the Program Assistant arrives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

This study has attempted to identify whether or not Program Assistants can be successful as the teachers of low-income, young homemakers in rural areas; to identify some of the methods of reaching and teaching this audience; and to develop publications which could be used in such a program.

1. Results before the completion of this project under conditions in Alabama should include the following:

   A. The number of Program Assistants that an experienced County Extension Home Economists can supervise effectively under two situations. The first is in addition to conducting the regular Extension Home Economics program and secondly, how many Program Assistants can an experienced County Extension Home Economist supervise if this is her major responsibility.

B. An indication of the total number of Home Visits, Working Visits or Group Meetings the homemakers must participate in prior to their developing the skills and the motivations needed if a family is going to live successfully in today's society.

C. A more accurate indication of the average number of families a Program Assistant who is employed part-time can reach and teach.

D. To develop a suggested "Training Course" for Program Assistants.

E. To develop suggested guidelines for the following Professional Cooperative Extension Service staff members: Administrators, Extension Home Economists and Specialists.

2. Suggested areas believed to be worthy of further investigation are as follows:

A. There is need to identify the most effective method and criteria the Cooperative Extension Service should employ when interviewing and employing Program Assistants.

B. There is need to investigate the effectiveness of using both men and women Program Assistants in conducting an educational program to raise the levels of living of entire families.

C. There is need for an investigation of the most effective ways that the Cooperative Extension Service might employ in an effort to enlist the cooperation of all service agencies and organizations.

D. There is need for a study to compare the effectiveness of a part-time Program Assistant and a full-time Program Assistant.

E. There is need for a study to determine advantages and/or disadvantages of conducting a similar educational program with a limited welfare program as opposed to an educational program with no welfare program.

F. There is need for s study to determine the need for the development of easy-to-read publications.

G. There is need for further study to determine the ultimate changes in behavior that can be expected from families who are economically, educationally and vocationally deprived.

H. There is need for further study to determine the most effective devices to use in measuring changes which low-income families make in social development.

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